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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is threefold: (1) to identify survival strategies for women currently holding positions in higher educational administration; (2) to suggest ways that female administrators can serve as advocates for others who may wish to obtain similar positions; and (3) to discuss means by which women seeking jobs in higher educational administration can broaden their possibilities. The survival strategies outlined for female administrators focus on areas such as affirmative action, delegation of decision making responsibility, establishment of networks with other women administrators, participation in assertiveness training, participation in professional organizations, evaluation of one's own administrative practices, improvement of supervisory attitudes and skills, promotion of activities designed to increase women's professional opportunities, and continuing professional development. Advocacy activities suggested include the compilation of information on administrative careers in higher education, and the encouragement of aspiring women administrators through mentorship and other personal contacts. Finally, guidelines are provided for women who wish to be administrators. These include job seeking strategies and suggestions for keeping abreast of professional developments in the field of higher educational administration. (GC)

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THE FEMALE ADMINISTRATOR IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

CAN SHE SURVIVE THE NEXT DECADE?

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THE FEMALE ADMINISTRATOR IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION: CAN SHE SURVIVE THE NEXT DECADE?

Much was written in the 1970's about women in higher education. However, little was researched to suggest what institutions of higher education should do to equip women to move upward in the central administrative structure and survive. The recent proliferation of literature about administrative opportunities for women reflects the problems of socialization and sterotyping, the limited access to education and employment opportunities, the lack of affirmative action practices by educational institutions, and the lack of female role models for women setting their career goals. The question is: "What are institutions of higher education doing to recruit, train, and/or promote capable women to administrative positions?" The answer is "not much". The question, then, becomes not what are the institutions doing but, rather, what are women doing for themselves and what are they willing to do for others.

Research conducted by Howard and Downey (1980) and Bayer and Astin (1975) indicates that though women rank higher today in teaching positions in higher education than they did in the early 70's, they

still rank low in administrative positions. Therefore, women in administration must begin to provide opportunities for other women. It becomes their responsibility to recommend and recruit capable women whenever their input is solicited, and to speak up with their recommendations when it is not. After doing this, incumbents must provide technical assistance to help other women survive in these administrative positions. The purpose of this paper is threefold: (1) to identify and describe some survival strategies for those of us who currently hold administrative positions in institutions of higher education: (2) to suggest strategies for use by us as women in administration as advocates for others who may wish to obtain an administrative position in an institution of higher education and (3) to present some plans for use by women seeking administrative positions in the institution of higher education during the next decade.

Leadership Positions Outlook In The Eighties

Rousow (1979) reported that population explosion in the 1940's, coupled with growth in educational opportunities, produced an abundance

of professionals with managerial skills. He noted, too, that in 1975 more than 39 million people between the ages of twenty-five and forty-four were in the civilian work force. He further predicted that this figure will rise to 60.5 million by the end of the 1980's. Therefore, career advancement for many, especially women, will come to a halt during the next decade.

The next decade presents a new challenge for existing women in administrative positions in institutions of higher education. The challenge is survival, which is partly due to the economists' forecast of slow economic growth, continued high inflation, and change in mission statements of institutions of higher education. All these courses give rise to women's not having the opportunity to advance to administrative positions or to grow professionally. Kanter (1979) states,

"Not having the chance to continue to move up the career ladder and/or the feeling of being stuck in a job that lacks opportunities for advancement, people can develop the feelings of bitterness, frustration, depression, alienation and even withdrawal. Often times, they give up trying to get ahead and turn into petty gripers or blockers who resist new ideas and innovations".

Howard and Downey (1980) state. No matter how effective women today are in administrative positions in institutions of higher education prospects for the 1980's indicate that there will be a limited number of leadership positions available for men and women. Therefore women will be faced with both the lack of jobs and discrimination."

In order for women to survive both of these barriers, they must have some special coping skills.

Survival Tips For Women In Administration In Institutions of Higher Education

In order for women to survive in administration in the 1980's, they must first be cognizant of the reality that discriminatory practices do exist, despite affirmative action. They must determine who is responsible for Title IX, EED and affirmative action and schedule a meeting with him/her. Second, they must share the power-delegate responsibility and involve people in the decision-making process. (The purpose is to keep them informed of all the information needed to make that decision and follow through on their decision to make sure it's approved by the appropriate superiors). Third, it is imperative that they create an informal network with women in similar jobs in other institutions of higher education. The purpose of this network is to exchange ideas, information and strategies. Benefits from such a mechanism vary from needed professional assistance to continued visibility. Fourth, the female administrator should organize and/or enroll in a campus assertiveness training group composed of other administrative and faculty women.

The purpose here is to improve self-esteem and to raise consciousness and self acceptance. Then too, it is absoultely necessary that women maintain membership in professional organizations and actively participate on committees, publish articles, and develop workshops for presentation at professional meetings. These activities will maintain the female's visibility in her profession. Also, women can gain tremendous mileage by organizing women's caucuses on their campuses. As important as is intra-institution communication, the woman must also spend time analyzing the decision-making practices on her campus. In many instances, this will prevent conflicts. Anderson, Crierson, and Lewis (1976) believe that women must unite with others to develop self-help and socio-professional support systems which will promote both psychological well-being and professional growth. In addition, the female administrator must analyze and evaluate her own administrative practices and procedures to insure that she is not guilty of the same dehumanizing practices so prevalent in the main administrative structure on her campus. Equally as important as the forementioned activities is the need for the female administrator to continue to improve her supervisory attitude.

This she can do through

1) explaining without bias the policy or an action of the university to operative faculty who question it, even though she may personally disagree with the policy under discussion;

2) quickly recognizing outstanding performance by any members of her subordinate group and reporting it to her superior;

3) playing no favorites and striving to judge each of her subordinate's actions objectively and fairly;

4) accepting the responsibility for any error by one of her subordinates when discussing the situation with her superior;

5) seeing her job as one which basically requires her to supervise the activities of her subordinates in such a manner that the objectives of the department, the school, and the institution are achieved.

Of great importance also is the need to identify factors affecting the status of women within the university (non-professionals, students, and professionals) and to suggest programs which will promote the welfare of female faculty, staff, and students within the university community.

Female administrators can also benefit greatly from organizing groups of women who have similiar interests to form research and publication teams, to sponsor research seminars and discussion groups pertinent to the administrative experience of women, and to sponsor workshops which teach grant proposal writing skills. Finally, the female administrator must study and keep abreast of what is happening in her career area. In order to keep abreast, one must be exposed to a wide variety of information. Much of the needed information can be found in periodicals and publications written by administrators. As needs and work habits become more complex, the effective female administrator must be able to evaluate and take action. It is only by knowing where to go for information that self development can continue. Reading contributes to one's ability to be creative, that is, to use imagination to envision what lies ahead.

Through the female administrator's participation in the activities listed above will go a long way toward helping her to experience success, full assurance of this success will come only if, in addition, she possesses in large quantity the following qualities:

intelligence, sensitivity to the feelings of others, a sense of humor, self-control, ability to express feelings and emotions, willingness to compromise, ability to lead, independence, frankness-speaking out on opinion, competence, and a spirit of competitiveness.

Women Administrators as Advocates for Others

Women in administrative positions in higher education can serve as a sources of information and support for others. Through informal networks, a handbook compiling all resources could be developed for dissemination to other women. The handbook could include such information as:

Occupational Outlook Handbook
Bureau of Labor Statistics
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, D.C.

Professional Women's Groups
American Association of University Women
2401 Virginia Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037
Price .50

Black Professional Women's Network
515 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

The last of these, a service to black women, offers opportunities for women to meet and discuss goals, aspirations and concerns with others.

A similar one, if not already established, could be organized for all women in general. The OOH, PWG, and BPWN serve as support mechanisms for women to reinforce and pursue their career aspirations.

Administrative women on university campuses must serve as mentors to make sure that opportunities for the advancement of other women to higher positions become fair, open, and equitable. They must become assertive and speak out for women's rights to obtain adminis rative posts on campuses, and then be willing to provide them with advice and information on the experiences of others in administration so as to facilitate their chances for success.

Administrative women must share relevant and available information about new ideas and practices relative to institutions of higher education administration. They must encourage other women to become familiar with the literature of innovations and the total operation of institutions of higher education. Innovations as they relate to missions, goals, and practices in the institutions of higher education should be understood clearly by women seeking educational leadership positions.

Other Tips for Women Seeking Administrative Positions

No matter how loudly current female administrators avocate the advancement of women to administrative positions, the women seeking the position must first do something for herself.

Per a survey of women in administrative positions in institutions of higher education, the following list was developed. The women must

1) distribute her vita, write a letter of application to the person in charge of the vacancy of her campus, and others, when an administrative position becomes available;

2) join professional organizations whose primary membership is women in higher education administration;

3) be open to learn from others, especially from competent women in administrative positions on her campus and other university campuses;

4) keep abreast of new ideas and practices in the entire system of higher education;

5) know herself, i.e., be aware of her needs, values, and objectives in order to be able to determine what it is that she needs to be happy in the position she is seeking;

6) understand the functioning of the position within the university, that is, to be knowledgeable of values, norms, key people, and subsystems in assessing the situation in order to plan for realistic changes;

7) analyze the responsibilities of the position to determine whether or not there are opportunities for professional growth by asking herself these questions: Is the position one where I myself will have accomplished something? Is the position one that will block me from pursuing self-actulization on or off the job.

As women consider and seek employment advancements in institutions of higher education in the 80's, they need to begin to examine their educational experiences and their academic professional preparation in higher education foundations and administration. It is an absolute must to be knowledgeable in these areas if becoming effective educational leaders are to follow.

The struggle to obtain positions and to survive in those positions will continue to be a problem for women as they seek administrative positions in institutions of higher education in the next decade.

Hopefully, the content of this paper will make the task for many of them easier.

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